CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Geyser Fiber Optic to the Home Project
Proposed Implementation Date:	April 1, 2013
Proponent:	3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, P.O. Box 429, Fairfield, Mt., 59436
Location:	Sec.4 & 8, T16N, R10E, Sec. 2, 4, 9,12,13,14,17, 22, 26, & 27,T17N, R10E, Sec. 16, T18N, R9E, Sec. 4, 12, & 13, T18N, R10E, Sec. 7, T18N, R11E, Sec. 33, T19N, R9E, Sec. 12, 13, & 14, T19N, R10E.
County:	Judith Basin

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

To upgrade existing exchanges with new fiber to the home (FTTH) The proposed routes include the Town of Geyser and the surrounding rural areas.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

3 Rivers Communications, Mt. DNRC, Lewistown Unit, Ethos Consultants, Inc. State Land Lessees, Judith Basin County Commissioners.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Montana Department of Transportation.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The “No Action” alternative.

The alternative to allow the placement of the new fiber optic cable system on State Lands.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter “NONE” If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:
Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

These areas are as stable as you can get. They have all been disturbed and contoured for vehicular travel. The project area is all within existing Right-of-Ways along existing County and State roads. The geology is not important in this case.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:
Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There is a very low probability of any water degradation from this project.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Pollutants or particulates will not be produced.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

There are no rare plants or cover types present.

No cumulative effects are expected.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Aquatic life will not be adversely affected. Wildlife usually avoid these areas due to people and vehicular traffic.

No cumulative effects are expected.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.
A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified several Species of Concern: Black-Tailed Prairie Dog, Wolverine, Hoary Bat, Fringed Myotis, Dwarf Shrew, Preble's Shrew, Northern Goshawk, Sprague's Pipet, Great Blue Herron, Ferruginous Hawk, Cassin's Finch, Brown Creeper, Bobolink, Pileated Woodpecker, Black Rosy-Finch, Clark's Nutcracker, Long-billed Curlew, Great Grey Owl, Pacific Wren, and the western Toad.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

There are no significant cultural resources within the proposed route that I am aware of. Ethos Consultants, Inc. has been contracted by 3 Rivers Communications to inventory the proposed project route.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

There should be no excessive noise or light associated with this project. There should be no change in the view shed because the new cable will be placed within the old Right-of-ways.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

There are no other activities nearby that should affect this project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

I am not aware of any other proposed projects or scoping for this area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Human health and safety should improve after this project is completed. There will be improved communications.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The improved communications in the project area will also benefit industrial, commercial and agricultural endeavors.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

I am not qualified to answer this question. I do not believe that there will be direct or cumulative effects to the employment market because of this project.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The tax base will not be affected.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes for this project.

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18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Additional services will not be required.

Cumulative effects from this project will be positive with improved communications.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There should be no effects-no changes due to this project.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

There is minimal to no recreational use from these Right-of-Way areas along the roadsides.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Additional housing will not be a requirement of this project.

No direct or cumulative effects are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Disruption is not likely. There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be negatively impacted by the proposed project. Improved communications will be the result of the project.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

There should be no shift in the quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The values for this Land Use License were taken from the latest departmental fee schedules. Under Utility Construction: Judith Basin County, Grazing with Influence 0-1 mile = $175.00, plus $40.00 per ¼ additional mile; and Cropland with Influence 0-1 mile= $300.00, plus $65.00 per ¼ additional mile.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Barny D. Smith, Lewistown Unit Manager, DNRC, TLMD
	Signature	**Date** **January 29, 2013** /s/ Barny D. Smith

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The alternative to allow the placement of a new fiber optic system on State lands.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Minimal impacts are expected with this upgrade project which will take place within the existing old Right-of-Way.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	**X**	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Clive Rooney
	Title:	Area Manager, NELO
Signature **/s/ Clive Rooney**		**Date** 2/13/13